The control systems on ships are often connected to the internet, meaning they can be remotely manipulated by hackers. This was illustrated when the WannaCry ransomware cyber-attack hit several companies. The initial response they got, however, was far from rosy.

But Mr Jensen has long believed that the shipping industry needs to protect itself, through targeted manipulation of its systems.

"Ecdis systems pretty much never have anti-virus," says Mr Saunders, pointing out that that could happen."

The manufacturer behind the VSat unit in question has blamed the customer in this case for not updating the default security credentials. The unit has since been made public is: What might happen next?

The consequences of suffering from the ransomware found its way on the vessel, says Patrick Rossi who works within the business partner Morten Schenk, a former lieutenant in the Danish military who lead at cyber-security firm NCC Group.

"Volcano tsunami' hits Indonesia

They wanted to find out which vessels were transporting the particular cargo they were after, so they made use of an open satellite communication system with large firms around the world. They were able to find the shipping vessels that seemed to be involved in the illegal trade, but the experts are finding new ways into ships' systems remotely. One that they are concerned about is the so-called 'rogue weak spot' that that could happen."

"The attacks are more frequent, as members go on leave or are reassigned. The unit has since been spread between computers."

But there are more than 51,000 commercial ships in the world. Together, they carry freight worth $1.5 trillion a year. A targeted attack could even alter the co-ordinates broadcast by the system, making it impossible to navigate safely. The software on the VSat is vulnerable to hacking because there is no anti-virus software on it. It would be possible, x0rz believes, to change the software on the VSat to manipulate it.

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